

THE ORIGIN OF PAUL'S ETHICS: A Study On Romans 14:1-12

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The study of Paul's ethics has been a growing field. The scholarship tries to bring up the significance and the importance of Paul's ethical teachings in his letters.¹ A part of the scholarship is the study of the origin of Paul's ethics. What is meant is study of the source that Paul might have used to form his ethical instructions. The relevant questions that can be asked: Can we find any influence of Jewish, Hellenistic and Christian materials in it? If it does, than what is the contribution of these specific traditions to Paul? What source(s) Paul used in forming his ethical teaching? If he use one or

1. To mention an effort in this field is the editing work of Brian S. Rosner who tried to set up a frame in studying Paul's ethics. See Brian S. Rosner, ed., *Understanding Paul's Ethics: Twentieth- Century Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

more sources, what is Paul's opinion regarding the role of these sources?

In general, scholars find that there are three areas that possibly could influence Paul in constructing his ethical teachings and, therefore, become the source of Paul's ethics. These sources are Jewish writings, Hellenistic writings, and Jesus Tradition (Christianity). These three areas go in parallel with Paul's personal life as he is brought up in these spheres. Paul is a Jew, but born in and was the citizen of the Greek city of Cilicia (Acts 21:9).² In the famous city of Cilicia, Paul should have been trained in Hellenistic literature. However, Paul was also educated in strict Jewish traditions under the great rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). These conditions may contribute to Paul's Jewish and Hellenistic influences in his life and teachings. At the peak of his career as a Pharisee, Paul was converted to Christianity by the *theophany* of Jesus Christ (Acts. 8). This Christ-event made him a faithful follower of Christ. And undoubtedly, the Christian values (Jesus Tradition) should also have influenced him in his ethical thought and teachings.

Our text is part of the larger section ranging from Romans 14:1-15:13.³ This paper tries to trace the origin of Paul's ethical

2. The bible texts are taken from the English Standard Version.

3. Scholars differ in locating the ending of the passage, either Romans 14:27, Romans 15:7, or Romans 15:13. However, the division of Romans 14:1-15:13 seems to be the most preferable. For examples, see Mark Reasoner, *The strong and the weak Romans 14.1-15.13 in context* (SNTSMS 103; Cambridge: CUP, 1999); Wayne A. Meeks, "Judgment and the Brother: Romans 14:1-15:13" in *Tradition and Interpretation in the*

teachings with special reference to Romans 14:1-12. To be exhaustive, the discussion should have covered the whole section. However, because of the limit of an article and in order to give an in-depth evaluation within this limit, the article will focus only at Romans 14:1-12.⁴ Besides, from the whole passage, Romans 14:1-12 shares significant contributions: it gives the description of the problems as well as the solution to the problems. The findings of this article might not be viewed as the conclusive principle regarding the origin of all Paul ethical teachings. I believe, however, the findings will give a significant sketch of the origin of Paul's ethics.

The thesis of this article is Paul based his ethical instructions for the church of Romans both on Jesus Tradition and on the Hebrew Bible (through the Jewish-Hellenistic writings). To Paul, the Jesus Tradition and the Hebrew Bible are authoritative and formative for his paraenesis. Though there is evidence of Hellenistic traditions, the role of Hellenistic paraenetical tradition is minor. Paul doesn't use Hellenistic values as the foundation for his teaching. If there are any Hellenistic references, Paul is influenced through his use of Jewish Hellenistic writings. Paul does not use Hellenistic writings as a main source to build up his teachings.

New Testament, Gerald F. Hawthorne & Otto Betz, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); . Lo, Lung-kwong, "Identity Crisis Reflected in Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Implications for the Chinese Christians' Controversy on Ancestral Worship", in *SBL Seminar Papers* No. 41 (2002).

4. For the unity of Romans 14:1-12 see also Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 831.

The Problems of Eating and Honoring Day

By close reading we come to know that Paul is addressing the problems of eating preference and honoring day in this passage.

⁵ Regarding the eating problem, there is difference among the church of Romans.⁶ Some people eat everything but the others prefer to eat only vegetables (14:2). People who prefer to eat vegetables seem to refrain themselves from meat and wine (cf. Romans 14:21). Some people esteem one day over another. They have a special reference over certain day and probably conduct themselves in suitable manner to it. However, the others esteem all day alike (14:5).

The food preference is not only a matter of taste or diet. The ones who prefer eating only vegetables are called the weak in faith (cf. 14:1). The preference thus comes from certain believe they hold. They refrain themselves from eating meat because they are afraid of consuming unclean (κοινων) meat (cf. Romans 14:14). The

5. Traditionally, Romans 14:1-15:13 is known as “the Strong and the Weak” passage. Paul’s reference to “the Strong” appears in Romans 15:1.

6. There have been debates over who are the Strong and the Weak in the church of Romans. Recently most scholars hold the view that the Weak are the Jewish Christians while the Strong are the Gentile Christians. The Weak are the ones who prefer to refrain themselves from certain food and wine. Also they hold to the celebration of a certain day. The Strong are the ones who eat all things and are not bound by honoring a certain day more than the other. See further discussion in Thomas R. Schreiner, *BECNT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 706-10.

word *κοινων* is used here as a contrast to *ἄγιος* rederning the cultic sense of purity.⁷ When Paul addresses this belief, Paul tries to convince them by sharing his own conviction that everything is clean (*καθαρα* – Romans 14:20). Again *καθαρα* is a word in the Jewish cultic belief.⁸ Therefore it is clear that the certain belief comes from the area of religious realm.⁹

The following problem Paul deals with is the attitude regarding certain day. It is obvious that the Christians in the church of Romans are divided into two groups. On one hand, some people esteem all days are alike but on the other hand, some people don't. Not like the first problem, the second one is debatable from the very beginning. There is a problem of translating the Greek text especially the first phrase *ὃς μὲν [γὰρ] κρίνει ἡμέραν* (14:5). It can either convey the notion of "beside or beyond" (indicating similarity, e.g. Romans 16:17) or "above or beyond" (indicating comparison).¹⁰ Scholars seem to prefer the later option, thus indicating

7. Hauck, "κοινωνος", *TNDT III*, 797.

8. Hauck, "καθαρος", *TNDT III*, 424.

9. Scholars generally identifies that the vegetables eaters are the Jewish Christians. Because of their Jewish background they do not feel free to eat meat. The meat could be unclean according to the Jewish food laws (cf. Romans 14:14, 21). However there are objections to this view because the Jewish people do not practice abstinence from wine (cf. Romans 14:21). See James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC 38B (Waco: Word, 1988), 827.

10. For surveys of translations, see. Raoul Dederen, "On Esteeming One Day Better Than Another" *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 9 (1971): 25.

“comparison” or “preference” in meaning.¹¹ Therefore, we may say that what Paul means in Romans 14:5 is that “one man [and woman] esteem one day as better than another; while other esteem every day alike.”

The issue of honoring a special day is not uniquely Jewish. While the Jews maintain Sabbath or Jewish feast, the Greco-Romans also recognize certain special day due to the astrological calculation. The Romans themselves have particular feasts to celebrate. Scholars hold different positions due to the interpretation of Paul’s certain days in Romans 14:5. While most scholars argue that Paul is referring to a certain day, Jewett judges that Paul is not referring to a particular day.¹² Whatever the reference might be, it is evident that honoring certain day has stirred up conflict among the Romans just as the eating preference issue does.

Do Neither Despise nor Judge, but Welcome

The problems of eating and honoring day lead to serious conflicts among Christians in the Church of Rome. The result is the act of despising and judging. The eaters despise their fellow non-eater Christians. On the other hand, the ones who abstain from eating meat pass judgment on the eaters. In the same manner, Paul

11. See for examples Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 804; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans ix-xvi*, ICC Vol. II (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1998), 704-705.

12. Jewett, *Romans*, 844-45.

is also referring to problems caused by the issue of honoring certain day.

In Romans 14:3, the one who eats is exhorted not to despise (ἐξουθενείτω) the non-eater. Dunn notes that the word ἐξουθενέω can convey a serious note of contempt based on its usages in the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish literature, e.g.: 2 Kings 19:21; 2 Chronicles 36:16; Ezekiel 22:8; Wisdom 4:18; and Luke 23:11.¹³ He further proposes that Paul's admonition here could have been influenced by the Maccabean period when the main issue is the relation of Jewish self-identity and Jewish/Gentile relations.¹⁴ Jews are under the power of the Gentile oppressors and even become slaves of the Gentiles. Therefore, the faithful Jews feels that they are the despised ones (τοὺς ἐξουθειημένους) by the Gentiles (2 Macc. 2:17).¹⁵

Dunn's proposal of the influence of the Maccabean period upon Paul, however, is weak for several reasons. We may notice that the usage of in Maccabean period and Paul has different context. While in Maccabean period the act of despising is from the Gentiles to the Jews, in Romans the attitude is among brothers. It is not plausible then that one will treat his brother with the treatment of the Gentiles toward the Jews. Therefore, because of the different contexts, the verb ἐξουθενέω in Romans 14:3 and in 2 Maccabees

13. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 802.

14. Dunn, *Romans*, 802.

15. Dunn, *Romans*, 802.

2:17 must bear different meanings as well. Romans must have conveyed a “lighter” note of contempt compared to Maccabean.¹⁶

Surprisingly, the New Testament has the passage of despising other that is very close to the Paul’s instruction. The Jesus Tradition in Luke 18:9 tell us how Jesus is against the act of despising brothers. Some people at the time tends to consider themselves righteous and at the same time despising his brothers. Jesus tells a parable using the character of a Pharisee and a tax-collector which both are allegedly Jews. The Pharisees boasts his righteousness before God and thanks God that he is not like other people (Luke 18:11). In other word, he is despising his fellow-Jews who is a tax-collector. Jesus is against the Pharisee’s attitude. In the end of the parable, Jesus proclaims that the tax-collector in fact is the truly righteous man before God.

Paul’s use of ἐξουθενέω in his parænesis to the churches is also apparent elsewhere in the context of brotherly lives. In 1 Corinthians 16:11, Paul reminds the Corinthian church to accept Timothy when he arrives. Paul urges that no one should despise (ἐξουθενήσῃ) him, not only because he is doing the work of the Lord, but also he is one of the brothers. Timothy seems quite troubled by

16. Note that the Hebrew Bible also has a different context to the usage ἐξουθενέω of in Romans. In all of the examples above none is used in context of brotherly lives. Mostly they relate to the contempt of man against God (against Jesus in Luke 23:11), except in Wis. 4:18 (by the unrighteous towards to the righteous and unrighteous).

the despising attitudes since he is just a young minister (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12).

In light of these findings, it is more convincing then to accept that Paul is alluding to the Jesus tradition in exhorting the Romans. Both the context and the content of the usage of ἐξουθενέω confirm this solution.

On the other hand, Paul also exhorts the one who does not eat not to pass judgment (κρινέτω) on the one who eats. Just like προσλαμβάνω, the verb κρινω is also one of the key words of Rom 14:1-12 (in large context Romans 14:1-15:13). The significance of the verb κρινω is evident Romans 14 since the verb κρινω and its cognates occur eleven times in chapter 14.¹⁷

What is Paul's concept of the κρίνω? The verb κρινω primarily means "to set apart so as to distinguish, separate"¹⁸. In the LXX the verb is used for predominantly legal words, especially the Hebrew word **מִשְׁפָּט** (*mispath*).¹⁹ In the New Testament κρινειν has the meaning "to judge". Paul uses the word in relation to the judgment of God. All men without exceptions will come to the judgment of God, including Christians (2 Cor. 5:10). In Romans

17. Dunn notices that the verb κρινω is used twice as often in chapter 14 (as well as in chapter 2) as in any other chapter of the New Testament. See Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 803. For the whole occurrences see Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 838 n. 51.

18. F.W. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG 3rd Edition; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 567.

19. Büchsel, "κρινω" *TDNT III*, 923.

κρινω is mainly used to refer the message of the day of wrath and the righteous judgment of God (Rom 2:1-11). But κρινω and its cognates may also bear a more light sense relating to the attitude (ethics). In Romans chapter 14 the verb κρινω bears the meaning of “pass an unfavorable judgment upon, criticize, find fault with, condemn” (Rom 14:3f, 10, 13a cf. 2:1abc, 3).²⁰

The importance of κρινω is again shown when Paul refers further to it in Romans 14:4.²¹ Here Paul in a rhetorical manner questions the judging attitude of the weak.²² His statement is “bold”: σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην;²³ What Paul wants to stress here is that the Weak must not judge the Strong. The Strong is the slave of Christ (God); therefore, the Strong is only

20. BDAG, 567.

21. We find a textual variation in the using of κύριος. Some texts attest the use of θεος (D F G 048 0150 6 33 Byz [L] *Lect* also many Latin manuscripts and other versions). The use of κύριος however is strongly supported by $\mathcal{P}46$ \aleph A B C P Ψ 1852 (syrc) copsa, bo. Base on the external evidences, the reading κυριος of is more preferable. Still the use θεος of is probably influenced by 14:3. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd edn. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994), 468.

22. Moo notes that “the very wording of the opening of the rhetorical question reveals the heart of Paul’s concern.” Moo, *Romans*, 839.

23. The principle expounds here is close to that found in Jas 4:11-12. It shows that “judging” issue is not only important to Paul but also to the New Testament writers in general. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans A Literary and Theological Commentary*, (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 213-14. cf. Theodore De Bruyn, *Pelagius’ Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans Translated with Introduction and Notes by Theodore De Bruyn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998 [1993]), 141.

subjected to God, his master and only responsible to Him.²⁴ The Weak has no authority at all to pass judgment on the Strong. It is the master of the Strong who owns the right to pass on judgment.

Paul's admonitions to Christians that they may not judge their brother is clearly based on the hope for God's judgment (Rom 14:4, 10 cf. Col 2:16).²⁵ Paul also quotes the Hebrew Bible in Romans 14:11 due to this regards. When Paul questions their act of despising and judging, he appeals to God's judgment to encourage the Romans to be follow his exhortations (cf. 14:10). In verse 11 we read the introductory γέγραπται γάρ. In Romans as well as in other letters of Paul, the word γέγραπται is used as a formula to introduce direct quotations (citations) of the Hebrew Bible.²⁶ The second phrase of Romans 14:11 ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται τῷ θεῷ in most part resembles the Isa 45:23b (LXX): ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ ἐξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα τῷ θεῷ with difference only in word order. Therefore, we may conclude positively that Paul does quote from Isa 45:23b in Rom 14:11.

24. See also Cranfield, *Romans ix-xvi*, 702-03.

25. For reference to the last judgment cf. Ps 5:5; 140:3; Mal 3:2; Rev 6:17. See John Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, TPI New Testament Commentary (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 328.

26. There are discussions among scholars concerning the criteria of a direct quotation (citation). Of all the opinions, the citation which is introduced by an introductory formula γέγραπται seems to be accepted in consensus as a citation of the Hebrew Bible. See the discussion of identifying criteria in Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, SNTSMS 74 (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 33-37.

Romans 14:11, however, contains the introductory words γάρ, Ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος that Isa 45:23 (LXX) does not have. Shum holds that “the scriptural citation here is actually composite, consisting of some other OT passages as well as Isa 45:23”²⁷ Noting that the expression appears fifteen times in the LXX with only one occurrence which is outside the prophetic books, Shum concludes that the expression is a quite common expression in the prophetic tradition.²⁸ Therefore, it is no more than a speculation if we attribute Paul’s phrase in Romans 14:11 to a certain LXX passage.²⁹

Cranfield, however, gives an interesting explanation why Paul used the phrase γάρ, Ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος instead of the original introductory formula of Isa 45:23 “κατ’ ἐμαυτοῦ ὀμνύω”. His remark is “the most probable explanation of Paul’s substitution of Ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος for κατ’ ἐμαυτοῦ ὀμνύω is that, quoting from memory, he inadvertently replaces one of OT divine assertive formula by another perhaps slightly more familiar.”³⁰ The possibility of this scenario could not be easily dismissed by Shum since Paul does not always practice quoting directly from LXX.

27 Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah in Romans*, WUNT 2.156 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 248.

28. Num 14:28; Isa 49:18; Jer 22:24; 26 (46 MT):18; Eze 5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48; 17:16; 18:3; 20:31,33; Zeph 2:9 cf. Eze 17:19. See Lum, *Paul’s Use*, 248 n. 209.

29. Some scholars argue that the phrase is taken from Isa 49:18 (see. Cranfield, *Romans ix-xvi*, 710). Though it is likely, Lum assesses that context does not allow for such a positive judgment. See. Lum, *Paul’s Use*, 249.

30. Cranfield, *Romans ix-xvi*, 710.

Responding the conflict in the church of Romans, Paul seriously demands the act of welcoming. Paul tells them (the Strong) to welcome (προσλαμβάνεσθε) those who are weak in faith (14:1). The word imperative προσλαμβάνω used here is a compound word made of the basic word λαμβανω and added with a preposition. Originally one possible meaning of the word λαμβανω is “to receive the object of which is in all areas of life from simple things to spiritual benefit.”³¹ Generally the compound form strengthens the basic meaning. Therefore προσλαμβάνω may have meaning to receive or welcome in significant condition.

The word προσλαμβάνω has various meanings in different contexts. The active form literally means “‘to take beside,’ into free or forced fellowship (possession).”³² In the LXX, προσλαμβάνω appears mostly in middle form though the occurrences have assumed the sense of the active.³³ Under such background, Delling notes that all the eleven προσλαμβάνω occurrences in the New Testament are in the middle form.³⁴ The four occurrences in Romans (Rm. 14:1, 3; 15:7 [2x]) have the meaning of “As God (or Christ) has taken every member of the Church into fellowship with Himself, so incorporate each other into your Christian circle with no

31. B. Siede, “λαμβάνω” *NIDNTT III*, 747.

32. Delling, “λαμβάνω” *TDNT IV*, 15.

33. In the LXX the active occurs only in Wis. 17:10. Here ποιητρια is used as the subject who receives. Delling, “λαμβάνω” *TDNT IV*, 15.

34. Delling, “λαμβάνω” *TDNT IV*, 15.

inner reservations (such as might spring from differences in religious custom).”³⁵

Cranfield stresses that “προσλαμβάνεσθε” is the fundamental imperative of the passage”.³⁶ We may agree with his statement. προσλαμβάνω is the key word because the idea “to take beside” or “to welcome” constitutes an important principle of the passage. It is demanded from both the Strong and the Weak. Paul summons the Strong in Romans to welcome (προσλαμβάνεσθε) the weak (14:1) and he also the Weak not to pass judgment on the strong because God has received (προσελάβετο) him (14:3). Later the church as a whole is also summoned to receive one another as Christ has received (προσελάβετο) them for the glory of God (Romans 15:7). The importance of προσλαμβάνω is also evident as Paul refers to both God and Christ as the receiver (14:3 and 15:7).

Now, our main concern is what has influenced Paul in this regard? In Romans 14:3 we find that Paul’s exhortation to the weak is grounded on the fact that God has received the strong. Paul particularly exhorts the non-eaters not to judge the eaters because of God. The idea of God taking someone into his side here clearly echoes Ps 18:17; 64:4; 72:24 [MT 18:16; 65:4; 73:24].³⁷ We may find the word προσλαμβάνω used in the LXX to translate the various verbs in the MT in order to refer to God as the receiver. In Ps 18:17 (MT

35. Delling, “λαμβάνω” *TDNT IV*, 15.

36. Cranfield, *Romans ix-xvi*, 700.

37. Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, 803.

18:16), the word προσλαμβάνω occurs together with its original word λαμβάνω. Here God draws the psalmist from many waters which is a symbol used for his enemies. In Ps 72:24 (MT 73:24) we encounter the fact that God will receive his people with glory despite what the oppressors did to them. In Ps 64:4 the idea of God taking his people into his side is shown in how God has not only chosen the psalmist but also he will take him into his court. All these texts show clearly the idea of God receiving man is a common concept for the Jews.³⁸ Therefore we may find that Paul is betraying the Hebrew Bible idea here when he admonishes the non-eater to welcome the eater and in the larger context, admonishes them to welcome each other.³⁹

38. In some case the LORD (κύριος) is the receiver instead of God (θεός). In Ps 26:10 (MT 27:10) the psalmist confesses "For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in." The LORD as the receiver is also expressed in 1 Samuel 22:12 (LXX). The LORD will take the Israel to himself and receive (make) them a people.

39 We may also find the idea of welcoming in Romans 15:7. At the end of his exhortations to the Strong and the Weak, he calls for welcoming one another. The instruction is based on the fact that "Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God". We may find allusions to the Jesus Tradition here. However, this discussion is beyond the limit of this article. For the scholars who propose the influence of Jesus Tradition on Paul's ethical teaching here, see David Wenham, *Paul Follower of Jesus of Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 263-65; Michael Thompson, *Clothed With Christ The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 231-32; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 706.

Be Fully Convinced

The other way Paul goes to deal with this conflict is by calling the attitude of “being fully convinced”. Though identifying himself with the Strong, Paul does not condemn the Weak for what they believe. Rather, Paul summons that everyone should be fully convinced (πληροφορέισθω) in his mind whatever his choices are.

The word πληροφορέισθω is important to Paul that he exercises certain form in this passage. If we take a closer look at the passage, we may find a form of chiasmus here. When Paul describes the problems of the Romans, he starts with the issue of eating (A) and then of honoring day (B). However, when he tries to propose solutions to the problem, Paul starts with the issue of honoring day (B') and then of eating (A'). In the middle of these texts is the exhortation that everyone should be fully convinced (C). Therefore we may find a pattern of A – B – C – B' – A' that forms a chiasmus. Paul seems to deliberately put his message in this form to exhort the Roman church. Within this form of chiasmus, the emphasized idea “to be fully convinced” is effectively conveyed.⁴⁰

40. Paul also applies the same principle in the church of the Corinthians though in a different context (1Cor 7:37). When dealing with the question of marries and not being married, Paul shows a genuine freedom for the Corinthians to choose. After all the importance is that whatever the choice is, it should not come out of others' pressure. A person must be firmly established in his heart about his decision. See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 598-99.

Further some scholars propose the influence of the wisdom tradition of the Hellenistic Jewish writings upon this idea of “being fully convinced”. Charles proposes that we may hear especially the echo of the wisdom motif in Ben Sirach 5:9-10.⁴¹ In Sirach 5:9 we find the exhortation to “Winnow not with every wind, and go not into every way: *for so doth the sinner that hath a double tongue.*”⁴² The meaning of the verse is clarified in Sirach 5:10 “Be steadfast concerning *that which thou knowest*, and let thy *speech* be one”.⁴³ Ben Sirach clearly wants to exhort his readers to hold on to what they know. They should not follow others’ opinions too easily. They should be steadfast to what they know. Even what they say must be “one”, i.e. consistent and in accord to what they know.⁴⁴ Therefore, it is evident here that the attitude of holding fast one’s belief is a very important attitude.

41. Following O. Michel, Dunn also sees the wisdom tradition influence particularly in Rom 14:5. See Dunn, *Romans* 9-16, p. 806: “In this Paul may consciously be echoing a wisdom motif”.

42. The text is taken from the King James with Apocrypha. The phrase in italic does not exist in the original Hebrew texts. It appears only in Greek and Syro-Hexaplar texts. It is probably an addition Sir 6:1c. See. R.H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English Volume 1 Apocrypha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 332.

43. Italic is mine. Here we find another textual variation. The manuscript of Hebrew C text reads “thy word” instead of “that which thou knowest” and “words” instead of “speech”. We follow the translation of Charles who uses the manuscript A (Hebrew text). The use of the same terminology “word(s)” is probably of some editorial works that intends for the conformity between the two terminologies. See. Charles, *Apocrypha*, 333.

44. Charles, *Apocrypha*, 333.

In this respect Schnabel gives further support for the relation between Paul's ethics and the wisdom tradition in Ben Sirach.⁴⁵ It is evident in Romans that Paul gives Christians freedom to choose based on the reasoning and discernment of their renewed mind (νοῦ cf. Rom 12:2); therefore Schnabel argues that such "personal freedom in the realm of the Christian ethic can only be understood, *partly*, on the background of the Jewish wisdom tradition."⁴⁶ If we compare to 1 Corinthians 7:37, we might seem that there is certain tradition that Paul uses.⁴⁷ The similarity of idea in Ben Sirach and Romans 14:5 shows such tradition might derive from the Jewish background.

Although the influence of Hellenistic Jewish writings is evident, we may also trace this concept of steadfastness (holding one's faith) back even to the Hebrew Bible itself. We may notice further that Paul's admonition here closely resembles the story of Abram in Genesis 15:1-21. This allusion is supported by Paul's description of the story in Romans 4:1-25. That Paul's intention in making an allusion to the story of Abram (Rom. 4:1-25 cf. Gen. 15:1-21) is evident from the fact that the verb πληροφορέω only occurs in Romans 4:21 & 14:5 in the New Testament. The meaning of

45. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom From Ben Sira to Paul* (WUNT 2; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985), 323-24, 330.

46. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 323-24, 330. Italic is mine. The other part, according to Schnabel, is the correlation of wisdom and law.

47. The thought of holding one's belief is probably a common tradition at the New Testament time. This may explain the use of such materials in James 1:6-8.

πληροφορέω conveyed by both passages is similar, i.e. “to achieve complete (full) certainty”.⁴⁸

Abraham is put as the example for the church of Romans. As an important figure of the Hebrew Bible, Abraham is said to be fully convinced (πληροφορηθεὶς) that God has the ability to keep his promises. Though his body grows old, but Abraham stands still on his believing to God who promises to give him a son. Nothing waver his belief to God's promise. Therefore, his faith is reckoned as righteousness (Gen. 15:6 cf. Rom. 4:3, 22). The same attitude is expected by Paul from the church in Romans. Though the Christians in Rome are “divided” by their beliefs, Paul does not call each group to give up those beliefs. In fact, Paul still summons that they should hold fast to their own faith. They should be fully convinced in their hearts in spite of the contrary views of others. This is exactly what Abram does despite the fact that the circumstances are against him. Such faithful attitude is so important to Paul because it will bring rewards (Rom. 4:21 “reckoned as righteousness) and because “whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

Base on the findings above we may conclude then that Paul has the story of Abram in his mind while he gives his exhortation to the church in Romans in Romans 14:1-12 and in larger context, Romans 14:1-15:13.⁴⁹ Paul intentionally makes Abraham as a model for the church of Romans. Although Paul might have considered Ben

48. Delling, “πληρώω” *TDNT VI*, 310.

49. Despite the fact that in Genesis 5:1-21 the verb πληροφορέω does not occur. In LXX, πληροφορέω is used only in Eccl 8:11.

Sirach in his writings, as proposed by some scholars, it seems that Ben Sirach is not foundational to him. He clearly put the Hebrew Bible as the main source for his call to be fully convinced.⁵⁰

Live to the Lord, Die to the Lord

The basic motive of both parties confirms further that no act of despising or judging is tolerable. In Romans 14:6, Paul gives his further evaluations that neither despising nor judging is allowed. He commends both groups for their choices because in fact both parties are trying to be faithful to the Lord. The day observers keep their practice in honor to the Lord. In the same manner, both the eaters and the non-eaters are also honoring the Lord. After all what is important is “because (γάρ) either group gives thanks to the God (εὐχαριστεῖ τῷ θεῷ)”.

The practice of “Giving thanks” echoes certain tradition. The phrase εὐχαριστεῖ τῷ θεῷ denotes the practice of giving thanks over meals. In the New Testament time, this is a common practice of Jesus (Mark 8:6 par.; 14:23 par.; John 6:11, 23). In the midst of the

50. Surprisingly this allusion has been so far neglected by scholars. In view that Rom 14:5 has close relation to 1 Cor 7:37, this finding might also shed some light to the Rosner’s work. When he deals with 1 Cor 7, Rosner finds that the chapter alludes to the Torah regulations. However, Rosner fails to give biblical references to the chapter as he did with chapter 5 & 6. Here we find the weak point of Rosner’s work. It is plausible then to take the story of Abram in Gen 5:1-21 as the possible source for Paul’s ethical teachings in 1 Cor 7. See Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture & Ethics A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7*, AGJU (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 147-76.

storm, Paul also practiced this “giving thanks” tradition (Acts 27:35). When he reminds the Corinthians of the Last Supper, he delivered to them the tradition that he received from the Lord.⁵¹ He told of Jesus “having given thanks broke the bread and took the cup of wine“(1 Cor. 11:24-25). These show that Paul might have been influenced by the Jesus Tradition in the practice that he is referring to.

On contrary, Tomson finds that it is more justified to say that Paul is influenced by the Jewish practice of blessings.⁵² He notices that both the liturgical order and the language used (εὐχαριστέω and εὐλογέω) in the meal betray the Jewish communal meal which in Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism is known as *havura* meals.⁵³ Against this background, Tomson tries to explain why Paul quotes the entire Eucharist tradition in 1 Corinthians 11 while the Corinthians have known it by heart? He suspects that the Corinthians are not following the liturgical order of the *havura* meal when in such a meal, there should be blessings at the beginning and at the end.⁵⁴ The Corinthians are reminded: “when you come together to eat, wait for one another” (1 Cor. 11:33).⁵⁵

51. For the view that Paul is handing down a Lord tradition, see Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 867-70.

52. Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, CRINT (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1990), 140-41.

53. Tomson, *Paul*, 140-41.

54. Tomson, *Paul*, 140-41.

55. For other records on blessing after meal: m.Ber 6:8, Jub. 22:6-9; Wars 2.131 (of the Essenes). Tomson, *Paul*, 140-41.

In fact, we may find such practice of blessings among the ancient Israel as well. Tomson's arguments, while convincing, do not present a comprehensive picture. We must go further to the Hebrew Bible to locate the origin of such tradition. Deuteronomy 8:10 tells us of God's words to the Israel. In time of prosperity they are summoned not to forget the Lord. On the contrary they are commanded to bless (εὐλογῆσαι) the Lord when they have eaten to full. Despite the practices of the Rabbinic Judaism as suggested by Tompson, we may see that the practice of blessings could have originated from the practice of ancient Israel.⁵⁶ Interestingly, we also find that the Qumran texts also propose that the benediction after meals was based on Deut 8:10.⁵⁷ This testimony supports the effort to look into the Hebrew Bible for the origin of giving thanks over meal. Weighing the evidences, we should thus take the Hebrew Bible as a primary source of such tradition though we may not also despise its usage in the Rabbinic Judaism. Deut 8:10 thus might come to Paul in Rom 14:6 through its usage in the later Jewish community.

56. Stuhlmacher also argues that "the customs of saying prayers of thanksgiving (before and) after meal, here approved of by Paul and taken over by early Christianity from the Jewish tradition, has its roots in Deut 8:10." See Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans A Commentary*, Trans. by Scott J. Hafemann (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 224.

57. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, AB 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 393.

Despite of their different preferences, the Romans have one in thing in common: they live to the Lord (14:7-8). In the Romans 14:7-9 Paul presents his basic theological convictions. With the preposition γάρ, these verses which are closely connected to each other are meant to explore further Paul's statement in Romans 14:6.

The important words here are relating to life and death. The verbs ζάω and ἀποθνήσκω appear in various forms in every verse of Romans 14:7-9. Paul exhorts both group that whether in living or dying, they must live and die to the Lord. None lives to himself and even dies to himself. In all things, either live or die, they are the Lord's.

Concerning Paul's view of life and death, Jaquette argues that Paul is influenced by philosophical tradition of the Greco-Romans of ἀδιάφορα (indifferent things).⁵⁸ Jaquette defends for Stoic background for the life and death matter as Epictetus states "although life is a matter of indifference, the use which you make of it is not a matter of indifference (*Diss.* 2.6.1)"⁵⁹ In fact, according to Jaquette, Paul uses the Hellenistic moral conventions for his

58. In the philosophical tradition, a wide consensus confirms life and death as ἀδιάφορά that is, indifferent things. Indifferent things are things that make no contribution to happiness or ill fortune; therefore they are not so prominent compared to virtues and vices. According to Epictetus, things that fall in this category are wealth, health, life, death, pleasures, and pain (Epict. *Diss.* 2.19.13). See James L. Jaquette, "Life and Death, *Adiaphora*, in Paul" *Novum Testamentum* 38 (1996): 30.

59. Jaquette, "Life and Death", 49.

parænesis with some adjustments based on the situation of the church.⁶⁰

Jaquette also argues that Paul is influenced in two ways.⁶¹ *Firstly*, according to Jaquette, life and death is a ἀδιάρθορα because they do not affect one's standing with God.⁶² Jaquette admits that Paul does not argue nor explain that life and death are ἀδιάρθορα. However, according to Jaquette, Paul simply assumes that the believers have this fact in their mind considering the prevailing Stoicism's ἀδιάρθορα of the day.⁶³ Based on the idea, Paul further builds up his arguments: if such important matters like life and death are only indifferent things, how should they dispute greatly over lesser matters such as the idea of eating and not eating or observing and not observing a day? After all the important thing is whether Christ is honored or not in a believer's body. *Secondly*, there are certain limitations to be considered in exercising ἀδιάρθορα. In the passage, we discover that the Romans are called to be responsible and to be attentive to one another. The "Strong" particularly is summoned to consider the Weak when they want to exercise their conviction.

Although it seems right at the first look, objections to Jaquette's position are numerous and convincing. Jaquette is right

60. Jaquette, "Life and Death", 30-33.

61. Jaquette, "Life and Death", 30-33.

62. Jaquette, "Life and Death", 30-33.

63. For the Stoicism and see further Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoicism in Philippians" in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 264-74.

in pointing many similarities between Paul and the Hellenistic philosophical tradition. However, if we take a more discern evaluation, we may find significant dissimilarities between them that lead us to object to Jaquette's conclusion. We may see that the motivation behind the action is totally different in the two traditions. The prevailing view of the Greco-Roman considers life and death as indifferent things. As indifferent matters, they pose no significant positions. To Paul, life and death is much more important in the sense that Christians live and die to the Lord. Our life (and so is death) is the Lord's and therefore is motivated for his glory. Fitzmyer rightly notes that "In life and in death, the Christian exists to *Kyrio*, i.e. to praise, honor, and serve God, the creator and the maker of all."⁶⁴ This difference shows a serious weakness of Jaquette's conclusion.

Moreover, Christians' life and death are subjected God's judgment. We do not live and die to ourselves alone. We must be able to present a responsible life and death before Him. At the end, everyone "will give an account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12). We don't find such motives in Stoic's ἀδιᾶφορα. Following this reasoning, therefore, the motivation for not "eating" or "observing" in Christian perspective is not that they are only indifferent matters. We have a deeper and more serious concern for that. Either we do or do not do, we commit them in honor of God (Christ).⁶⁵

64. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 691.

65. See also Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 801.

Further, Paul stresses these matters of life and death are so important that Christ died and came to life. Paul strongly argues that for this (εἰς τοῦτο) Christ died and came to life (14: 9). If life and death are *just* indifferent things, then why should Christ die and live again? It implies that life and death are especially important. Jaquette misses this important point in his observations. In fact, Paul uses this Christ's motive in proposing the solution to the Romans conflicts. Christ has died for them and even lived again both for the Strong and the Weak as an act of receiving both parties; therefore they all should receive one another (cf. Rom 15:7). Despise and judgment are no longer relevant then in the relationship among Christians. Since they all belong to God, then only God himself reserves the true right to judgment.

Therefore, to argue that Paul uses Hellenistic philosophical tradition in this passage is somehow not justified to Paul.⁶⁶ The words might be synonymous and Paul might have thought of this tradition in his paraenesis. However Paul clearly does not base his exhortations on the idea ἀδιάρφορα of from the Hellenistic philosophical tradition.

Instead, we might find echoes of certain Jesus tradition in Rom. 14:7-9. The first phrase of v. 9 (Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἔζησεν) echoes traditional terminology about the death and resurrection of

66. Against Dunn (Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 807) and Cranfield (Cranfield, *Romans ix-xvi*, 707 n. 3). Both of them also see the influence of Greek philosophy.

Christ.⁶⁷ We may find a close example of the wordings in Romans 8:34 (Χριστὸς [Ἰησοῦς] ὁ ἀποθανών, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐγερθεὶς) and in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ... καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται). The expression “Christ died (ἀποθνήσκω) and was raised (ἐγείρω)” is a common expression in both. It is most probably it reflects the traditional expression of early Christian church.

We have to acknowledge that Paul's wordings here are slightly different from tradition mentioned above. These have been objections to scholars. Instead of the more common phrase ἀποθνήσκω and ἐγείρω, Paul uses the formula of “ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἔζησεν” in Romans 14:9. However, this difference does not exclude the possibility that Paul is still in line with the tradition above.⁶⁸ This difference, however, may be explained from the context of verse 7-9. In verse 7 & 8 the verbs ζάω and ἀποθνήσκω are used consistently by Paul. We may suspect that Paul uses ἔζησεν in v. 9 instead of the traditional ἐγείρω to keep the wordings parallel to the previous verses.⁶⁹ In that case we might say that Paul is still dependent on a Christian tradition through his own contextual adjustment.

67. See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 691. According to Fitzmyer, “the wordings are formulaic and used widely in the New Testament.”

68. Cf. Moo who sees that “the parallels between these verses [Rom 14:1-12] and other NT texts, as well as the formulaic wording of, e.g., v. 9a suggests that Paul is here paraphrasing a widespread early Christian tradition.” See Moo, *Romans*, 844 n. 81.

69. Here (Rom 14:9) we have to deal with a textual variation issue. The Textus Receptus uses the phrase ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἔζησεν which seems to the oldest and best attested reading. The reading is supported by stronger texts (\aleph^* A B C 0150 256 365 1319 copsa, bo). A variant reading ἀπέθανεν

Conclusion

The investigation above shows clearly that Paul's ethical teachings in Rom 14:1-12 have two main sources: the Hebrew Bible and the Jesus tradition. Paul quotes and alludes to the Hebrew Bible. When Paul exhorts the Weak not to judge the Strong, he is alluding to the Jesus Tradition in Luke 18:9. Further Paul also quotes Isaiah 45:23 (LXX) in Romans 14:11 as a reference for his admonitions for not despising. In this, Paul shows that he uses the Hebrew Bible as the ground for his ethical teachings. When Paul encourages the attitude of welcoming as the solution to the conflict (Romans 14:1, 3), he also alludes to the Hebrew Bible, particularly the Psalms where God is described as the receiver. If God has received his people, the weak must also receive his fellow Christian (the Strong) and finally, the church of Romans should receive one another.

Paul calls for steadfastness in belief for both the Strong and the Weak. They must be fully convinced in what they choose. When Paul encourages the Romans to be fully convinced, he is using the

καὶ ἀνέστη is attested by several old Latin manuscripts. However internal evidence is weak since the reading with ἀνέστη might be an adaptation of 1 Thess 4:14 (Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη). Another variant looks like an attempt to put together the various readings above. Therefore it reads καὶ ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη καὶ ἔζησεν (N2 D1 [P Ψ 33 424* 2200 *omit first* καὶ.] 0209vid Byz [L] Lect) or ἔζησεν καὶ ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη (D*,2). See Metzger, *Textual*, 468.

story of Abraham as a grand motive. Although the motif has some closeness to the wisdom motif in Ben Sira, however we find that Paul is not using Ben Sirach for his exhortations. We may conclude then that in his encouragement to be fully convinced, Paul is using the Hebrew Bible as the foundation as we may see from the story of Abraham. Though Paul might have taken Ben Sirach into consideration, the basic source is still the Hebrew Bible.

Finally when Paul reminds the Romans of the motive “live to the Lord, die to the Lord”, he is alluding to the Hebrew Bible that comes to Paul through the Jewish writings. Paul’s note of “giving thanks over meal” is referring to the practice of *havura* meal among the Hellenistic Jews which is familiar to the church of Romans at that time. However, Paul is also using Deuteronomy 8:10 as the motivation for this exhortation.

Paul is evidently referring to the Jesus Tradition when encourage for the solution of the conflict. Although it has something in common with the Stoicism’s ἀδιάρρητα, Paul clearly doesn’t use it as the motive for his exhortation. Jesus’ death and life again is evidently used as the motive to encourage the Romans to find solution to the conflict. In fact, both the Strong and the Weak try to be faithful to the Lord in their preferences and beliefs. Due to this fact, Paul urges the cessation of the conflict among them. Paul alludes to the Jesus Tradition in order to put to an end the acts of despising and judging.

In this last exhortation, we may also find the complete example the sources of Paul's ethics as proposed in the thesis. Paul uses the Hebrew Bible itself, the Hebrew Bible that comes to Paul through Jewish writings and the Jesus Tradition. The influence of Hellenistic writings is minor and even if there is any, it has been incorporated in the Hellenistic Jewish writings.